

Wm. Williams
Cum gratia

ANNUAL HEALTH REPORT,

FOR BRIXHAM URBAN DISTRICT,

1896.

MR. CHAIRMAN AND GENTLEMEN,

I have much pleasure in laying before you my second Annual Report, on the Brixham Urban District for 1895.

During the year the number of deaths reported, was 124,—59 males, and 65 females, giving the Annual death rate of 14·7 per thousand; this rate is 1·4 less than last year. Seven of the deaths registered occurred amongst visitors, who had come into the district in a delicate state of health. Excluding the deaths amongst visitors, the rate is 13·9 per thousand. Three deaths were due to accident, and one to suicide.

The number of births reported was 257—130 males and 127 females, giving an annual rate of 30·5 per thousand, or a net gain of 15·8 per thousand. The infant mortality was 108 per thousand, compared with 97 per thousand in 1895.

There is some doubt as to the correctness of the estimated population, and in taking the figure at 8,400 to the middle of 1895, it has probably been considerably under estimated.

TABLE OF CAUSES OF DEATH.

	under 5 years			over 5 years		
SMALL POX	—	..	..	—	..	—
SCARLATINA	1	..	..	—	..	—
DIPHTHERIA	—	..	..	2	..	—
MEMBRANOUS CROUP ..	—	..	..	—	..	—
FEVERS—TYPHUS ..	—	..	..	—	..	—
TYPHOID	—	..	..	2	..	—
CONTINUED	—	..	..	—	..	—
RELAPSING	—	..	..	—	..	—
PUERPERAL	—	..	..	—	..	—
CHOLERA	—	..	..	—	..	—
ERYSIPELAS	—	..	..	—	..	—
MEASLES	—	..	..	—	..	—
WHOOPING COUGH ..	4	..	..	—	..	—
DIARRHOEA & DYSENTERY ..	2	..	..	—	..	—
RHEUMATIC FEVER ..	—	..	..	1	..	—
PHTHISIS	—	..	..	10	..	—
BRONCHITIS	5	..	..	2	..	—
PNEUMONIA	3	..	..	5	..	—
PLEURISY	—	..	..	—	..	—
HEART DISEASE	—	..	..	13	..	—
INFLUENZA	—	..	..	3	..	—
INJURIES	1	..	..	4	..	—
ALL OTHER CAUSES ..	24	..	..	42	..	—
Totals	40			84		

The Zymotic rate is 1·4 per thousand.

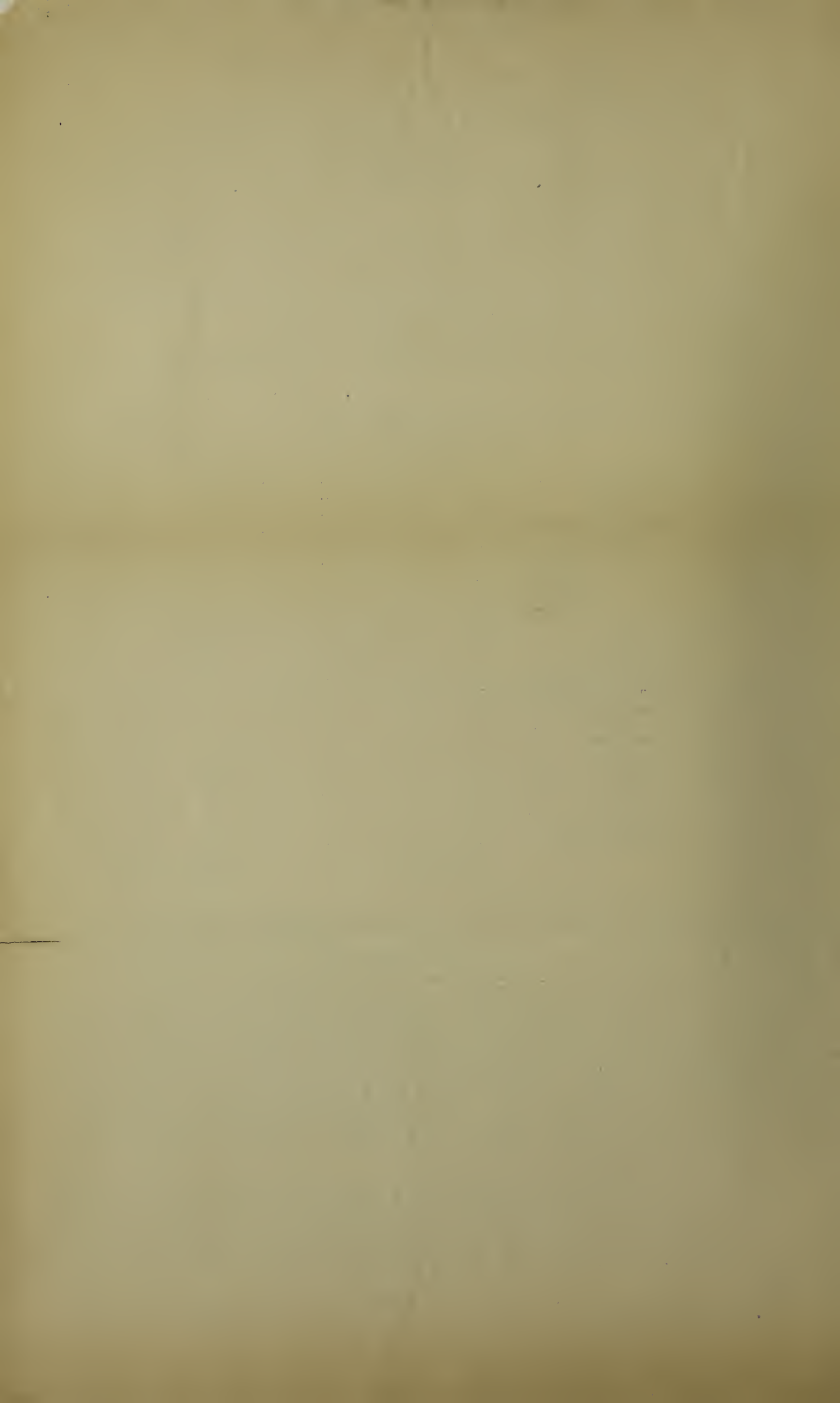
Referring to Diseases mentioned in the foregoing list:—SCARLATINA. A few cases were notified; there was one death.

DIPHTHERIA. Nine cases were notified; two ended fatally; some of the cases reported were regarded as doubtful. In nearly all, the cause of the disease was traced to sanitary defects on the premises.

TYPHOID. Twenty cases were reported during the year; in two of these the persons came into the district ill, having developed the disease elsewhere. The greater number of the cases occurred during the very dry weather in April and May; the rainfall for the first 5 months of the year was considerably below that of the two previous years, the amount registered being 10·82 in 1894, and 9·18 in 1895, whereas in 1895 the total to the end of May was only 4·9 inches. For these figures I am indebted to Mr. Lakeman. Enquiries into the cause of the fever failed to show that it was due to a contaminated water or milk supply. Thirteen of the houses in which the disease originated, used the town water supply; in three cases the water used was taken from wells; the water in these instances was used by a large number of people amongst whom no other cases occurred. The disease did not follow in the track of any one milk supply; the milk in all the cases being obtained from dairies supplying a very large number of customers. Had the disease been caused by either milk or water, the number of cases would have assumed very large proportions.

As a rule there were sufficient defects in the sanitary arrangements of the various houses in which cases occurred to account for the disease. Ten of the houses in which the disease originated are situated on the sides of the steep hills, on which the greater part of the town is built; owing to imperfect sewer ventilation, the houses in this situation are more likely to suffer, for sewer gas interceptors and properly constructed drain ventilators are few, and it is a matter of common occurrence for traps in the higher parts of the town to be forced when an east wind is blowing and the tide is low, for then the main sewer out-fall is exposed and the sewer gas is forced back.

INFLUENZA. There was no general outbreak of the disease; but three isolated cases which ended fatally were reported.



SANITARY WORK.

In an old town like this, with so many houses built on no particular plan and with very slight regard to sufficient air space, it is an extremely difficult matter to convert the somewhat primitive sanitary arrangements into such as one would desire; but in spite of difficulties, a good deal of useful work has been done. The usual inspections of houses, dairies, milkshops, cowsheds, bake-houses, and slaughter houses were made during the year. In all cases where sanitary defects were discovered, steps are taken to have them corrected. The condition of the slaughter houses has been improved.

One of the most important works carried out during the year, was the completion of the Higher Brixham Sewer.

The ventilation of the old Sewers has received attention and several ventilating shafts have been erected; road ventilators have been avoided, as they had previously been found unsatisfactory. I would recommend that the work of ventilating all the sewers be undertaken under one comprehensive scheme.

WATER. The water question has had a considerable amount of attention and the Council is awaiting the plans of the engineer. This has been a most difficult undertaking, but when the engineer's scheme is completed there will be an ample supply for the town, not only as it is, but sufficient to meet the requirements of a larger Brixham.

The future health of the district depends mainly on the possession of a large and reliable water supply; the present supply, as has been already pointed out, is not sufficient to meet the demands of the town in the summer; and although the distribution of water during the past dry season was most judiciously and skilfully arranged, the fact remained that many houses were at times without water; this meant the unsealing of traps and the consequent escape of sewer gas in and around dwellings.

MAIN SEWER OUTFALL. There has been delay in dealing with this matter, on account of difficulty in determining the set of the tide. The present outfall is objectionable, not only on account of the reason already stated, but also because at low tide there is the foul smell of the sewer gas escaping from the unprotected outlet, and further, from a deposit of filth on the shore at the foot of the pier; this is by no means beneficial to the inhabitants of the houses in the immediate neighbourhood.

THE LEAT. Directions have been given that the work of paving the bottom of the leat be commenced early in the year; with a smooth rounded bottom, there will be no likelihood of the continuance of the present nuisance. It would be an advantage if a syphon trap were placed where the leat joins the culvert, as it would prevent the back flow of sewer gas.

SUNDAY SCHOOLS. Last year it was recommended that the managers of the various Sunday Schools in the district be asked to put their schools on the same footing as the Board and National Schools, with regard to closure, in case of an outbreak of infectious disease; the request has been most readily complied with. This step may prove to be of great benefit, should necessity arise, for putting the closure in force, for the good that is done in closing the day schools is often to a large extent discounted when the more crowded Sunday Schools remain open.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES HOSPITAL. The question has been under consideration and endeavours are being made to obtain a house which would be suitable for isolating cases in.

BYE-LAWS. The process of resisting the Bye-laws is still going on; the necessity of new Bye-laws is very great, especially those relating to New Street and Buildings, and also those relating to Drainage &c.

The situation and climate of Brixham are very much in its favour as a health resort; year by year the number of visitors is increasing, and many new houses are being built to meet the greater demands for accommodation of those who come for the sake of their health; to encourage this new development which is of obvious advantage pecuniarily to the town, extra care should be bestowed in safeguarding the health of the people; in other words money may have to be expended in carrying out the necessary sanitary work, but money thus spent is not by any means wasted, it is simply a case of putting more capital into business, and in the long run it will all be repaid with interest.

G. BLACKER ELLIOTT,
M.O.H.

